



## Office of Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs

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## Iowa Department of Human Rights

**The Iowa Department of  
Human Rights brings  
strength to our rich Iowa  
heritage.**

**We eliminate cultural and  
economic barriers, and  
work to empower Iowans.**

**We are the voice for many.**



**We Grow Opportunity**

## Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

The **Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs** in the Iowa Department of Human Rights is the permanent agency to advocate for Iowans of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage.

The mission of the Office is to ensure Iowa's Asians and Pacific Islanders have opportunities equal to other Iowans in education, employment, health care, housing and safety, and to publicize the accomplishments and contributions of the Asian and Pacific Islanders (APIs) to the state.

The Office's services include:

- Advocating for culturally and linguistically appropriate services in government agencies and other assistance providers
- Serving as liaison between the Office and the public
- Ensuring constituents are treated fairly and have equal rights and access
- Recommending action to elected officials





## 2015-2016 Priorities

### Economic/Workforce Development

Iowa is home to more than 76,000 individuals of Asian descent, making up 2.3% of the state's total population. By and large, members of the Asian communities are doing well. However, we cannot forget the recent immigrants and refugees who experience economic vulnerability and barriers to employment.

The Office is working to help Iowa employers tap into this new pool of potential employees.

Specifically, the Office is:

- Increasing collaboration between community colleges, employers, non-profit agencies and local workforce programs to expand services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients, create community- and work-based learning, and develop need-based training.
- Working with the Central Iowa Investment Board to identify "refugees" as a special needs population and dedicate resources to help them become self-sufficient.

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### Healthcare

While the majority of APIs in Iowa have access to healthcare, there remain significant barriers to achieving greater health and well being, particularly for LEP and refugee members of the community.

By employing the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS), Iowa would be able to use a nationally proven framework for healthcare organizations to provide services that are appropriate for diverse cultures, languages, beliefs and practices.

To achieve this, the Office is:

- Working with the Iowa Department of Human Rights and healthcare providers to use CLAS when serving the LEP population in the state.
- Collaborating with healthcare providers, non-profit agencies and communities to provide more interpreter training to improve the quality and quantity of interpreters in new Asian languages in Iowa.

### Language Access

Language is one of the top barriers for APIs in being able to access government programs navigate the new system in which they live, and fully contribute to the economic and civic development of their new home.

The ability to understand and communicate in English has a significant impact on a new American's ability to find a job, advance in a career and become civically active in his or her community.

To enhance language access, the Office is:

- Engaging relevant organizations and communities in discussions about language access issues to provide education and spur action.
- Sharing best practices.
- Improving interpreter resources and the quality of interpreters in the State of Iowa.